

will go a long way toward heading off domestic political frenzy over Iran in the United States; Iran need not take its place alongside Rhodesia and Taiwan as rallying points for the right wing.

There are other specific gestures that would have a dramatic and immediate impact on the Iranians: The president could take visible steps to eliminate the CIA presence at the embassy in Tehran and provide some reassurance of nonintervention and accommodation to the new leadership. He could also name a new American ambassador to Iran who has never had any ties with the shah and is associated with a more receptive attitude toward Third World nationalism than William Sullivan. In a culture that considers symbolic acts to be substantively revealing, that would be taken as a fresh start.

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RETHINKING THE UNTHINKABLE

by Leon V. Sigal

While Congress and the American public agonize over a proposed new strategic arms limitation agreement (SALT II), another debate—more muted, but potentially more agonizing—is percolating today deep within the defense community. That debate, stimulated by recent innovations in weapons systems, concerns the doctrine that rationalizes their development and deployment. What is at stake is a fundamental re-examination of U.S. strategic thinking and a growing acceptance among American strategists of the idea of fighting a nuclear war.

The refrain is familiar. Twenty years ago, when strategists began to foresee the end of American nuclear supremacy, two seminal works on nuclear war appeared: Albert Wohlstetter's article, "The Delicate Balance of Terror," and Herman Kahn's lectures, *On Thermonuclear War*. Both questioned American reliance on deterrence and pointed to the eventuality of nuclear war. Wohlstetter emphasized that deterrence "would not of itself remove the danger of accidental outbreak or limit the damage in case deterrence failed; nor would it be at all adequate for crises on the periphery." Kahn was more explicit, asserting that forces for deterrence might not suffice and that the United States had to prepare to fight a nuclear war:

Once one accepts the idea that deterrence is not absolutely reliable and that it would be possible to survive a war, then [one] may be willing to buy insurance—to spend money on preparations to . . . limit damage, facilitate recuperation, and to get the best military result possible—at least "to prevail" in some meaningful sense if you cannot win.

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"To view events
a both sides to Pre-empt!"
By [unclear]
(see Andre Amelin)

Short of direct attack on the United States, Kahn distinguished two other possibilities to be deterred. The first was indirect enemy aggression, such as an attack on or a threat against a European ally. The second was the escalation of war, or the threat of such escalation, for nuclear bargaining or blackmail. In order to prevent such circumstances from arising, Kahn contemplated first use of nuclear weapons by the United States.¹

Today, when both the United States and the USSR are capable of retaliating with fearsome consequences after an enemy first strike, strategists are once again thinking the unthinkable—considering circumstances under which the United States would initiate and wage nuclear war. This renewed discussion is not a superficial shift in doctrine. It reflects changes in targeting programs and force procurement within the armed services.

Throughout the two intervening decades, the United States has had many more nuclear warheads and targeting options than necessary to deter a first strike on the United States or an attack on its European allies. Never more than a small fraction of the 25,000 targets in the strategic plan were enemy cities. Since the mid-1960s, moreover, Washington has had untold numbers of nuclear weapons based around the globe—about 7,000 in Europe alone. In addition to the weapons carried on long-range strategic missiles and bombers, they include intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) warheads, bombs carried by tactical aircraft, artillery shells, demolition munitions, and surface-to-air missile warheads for air defense. Their destructive force ranges from below that of some conventional bombs to far greater than that of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

No Substitute for Victory

The advent of nuclear parity with the USSR threatened to invalidate traditional

¹Albert Wohlstetter, "The Delicate Balance of Terror," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1959; and Herman Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960).



military ideology. Yet it has never shaken the faith of some strategists, civilian as well as military, in the tenets of that ideology: that armed forces exist to fight wars, not just to deter their outbreak; that in war there is no substitute for victory; that defeating the enemy requires overwhelming its forces; and that the services should have whatever capabilities they need to accomplish that end.

scally
(su!)

These traditionalists find nuclear war fighting attractive.

Now, a newly developed generation of battlefield nuclear weapons has strengthened their hand. Improved accuracy has permitted miniaturization of warheads, reducing blast effects to the equivalent of less than 50 tons of TNT. Changes in design and materials have led to the development of enhanced radiation artillery shells (so-called neutron bombs), which are capable of killing men in tanks without devastating everything in the surrounding area. Suppressed radiation weapons can destroy hard targets, while reducing fallout. Induced radiation weapons yield radioactivity of short duration—hours or, at most, days—which can be used to close a mountain pass temporarily. Finally, novel guidance techniques have greatly improved the accuracy of cruise missiles for use against hard targets, whether on the battlefield or in the enemy heartland.

Also new is the sanguine, if not cavalier, attitude among growing numbers of defense planners who maintain that the United States should build a nuclear war-fighting capability into battlefield deployments and targeting plans. The U.S. war-fighting posture is even publicly acknowledged, albeit obliquely, in official pronouncements. In the 1975 Annual Defense Department Report to Congress, then Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger called for an increase in targeting options and in forces to strike those targets. He spoke of "a series of measured responses to aggression which bear some relation to the provocation, have prospects of terminating hostilities before general nuclear war breaks out, and leave some possibility for restoring deterrence." It was under him that the nuclear war-fighting doctrine received official sanction.

To appreciate what Schlesinger meant, it may be useful to compare the five elements of nuclear war fighting that Paul Nitze has warned that the Soviets are developing:

1. A powerful counterforce capability. . . .
2. Forces sufficiently hardened, dispersed,

mobile, or defended as to make a possible counterforce response by the other side disadvantageous. . . .

3. Sufficient survival reserve forces . . . to hold the enemy's population and industry disproportionately at risk;
4. Active and passive defense measures, including civil defense and hardened and dispersed command and control facilities. . . .
5. The means and the determination not to let the other side get in the first blow — i.e., to pre-empt if necessary.²

Yet a Russian Nitze closely reading Schlesinger's defense posture statement for 1976 might have reached the same conclusion about American intentions. Schlesinger saw the need for American forces that

in response to Soviet actions, could implement a variety of limited preplanned options and react rapidly to retargeting orders so as to deter any range of further attacks that a potential enemy might contemplate. . . . This force should have some ability to destroy hard targets, even though we would prefer to see both sides avoid major counterforce capabilities. . . . It should also have the accuracy to attack with low-yield weapons, soft point targets without causing large-scale collateral damage. And it should be supported by a program of fallout shelters and population relocation. . . .

The Great Debate

Several doctrinal disagreements pit the war fighters against exponents of the still dominant school of strategic thought, the stable balancers.

To stable balancers, the sheer destructiveness of nuclear war has invalidated any distinction between winning and losing. Thus, it has rendered meaningless the very idea of military strategy as the efficient employment of force to achieve a state's objectives. As former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara once stated, "There is no longer any such thing as strategy, only crisis management." Moreover, the certainty that any use of nuclear weapons would result in un-

² Paul H. Nitze, "Deterring Our Deterrent," FOREIGN POLICY 25 (Winter 1976-77), pp. 197-198.

* Prod. for large-scale limited nuclear war in Europe.

* i.e. of nuclear bargaining, threats of terrorism

(b) nuclear avoidance

precedented devastation makes the firebreak between conventional and nuclear weapons more salient than any other distinction, geographical or functional.

In the event that the threshold between conventional and nuclear war is crossed, stable balancers maintain that no other limits are likely to provide an obvious focal point for mutual restraint. In other words, graduated deterrence means gradual escalation. For these reasons, Paul Warnke, former director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, opposed miniaturization of battlefield nuclear weapons in testimony before the Arms Control Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1974:

To the extent that mininukes blur the distinction between conventional weapons and nuclear weapons, they lower the nuclear threshold. . . . [In] the event of actual conflict the availability of these

smaller, neater, cleaner nuclear weapons might lead to their premature and unnecessary use. . . . And once the nuclear threshold is crossed the process of escalation could become irreversible.

This expectation rests on the assumption that the USSR would react to American first use with escalation of its own.

Likewise, stable balancers consider command and control systems inadequate for limiting escalation. Rapid destruction and uncertainty would subject command and control arrangements to an unprecedented strain that they are unlikely to withstand.

Stable balancers also point out that procuring more weapons of greater technological sophistication and designing more complex targeting programs to meet every conceivable contingency may in fact weaken mutual deterrence. Far from inducing restraint, such policies might prompt the adversary to buy more weapons of its own and increase the

Stable Balancers argue that:

- 1) Nuclear weapons mark a distinct breakpoint in the historical evolution of warfare in the current continuum of military capability.
- 2) First use of nuclear weapons will lead to reciprocal escalation, eventually spiraling into general war.
- 3) Command and control, precarious in the best of circumstances, is all the more so in nuclear war.
- 4) Nuclear war resulting from an accident, a miscalculation, or the unauthorized use of nuclear weapons is best averted by deploying fewer nuclear weapons and centralizing authority over their use.
- 5) A Soviet attack on Europe is deterred by conventional forces and the risk of nuclear escalation.
- 6) Marginal superiority in nuclear capability under conditions of mutual assured destruction has little political significance.

7) Attempt to 40. get marginal superiority will lead to...
(at most, very temporary success, at cost of...)

War Fighters argue that:

- 1) Nuclear weapons, like all previous advances in military technology, are usable and likely to be used.
- 2) Deterrence will remain a viable means of controlling escalation following the outbreak of nuclear war. Even if it does not, such a war is still worth winning.
- 3) Highly centralized command and control in nuclear war would facilitate bargaining in ways it has not in conventional war.
- 4) The possibility of unintentional nuclear exchange requires a full range of options to reinforce deterrence.
- 5) A Soviet attack on Europe is deterred by the certainty that the United States will use its nuclear weapons. This is assured only by having options for every contingency.
- 6) Even marginal nuclear superiority will reassure allies and make opponents more cautious.

7) No way 41. (win against) to keep from proving marginal superiority...

risk of accident, miscalculation, or unauthorized use. Moreover, in a crisis, once war is perceived as inevitable, battlefield nuclear weapons may become targets—like the American fleet at Pearl Harbor—instead of deterrents to the enemy. The presence of these weapons near the front might cause the enemy to launch a pre-emptive strike in a crisis, out of fear that a commander on the front would use them rather than see them overrun. In any event, they would hardly deter an attack they could not survive.

Stable balancers also wonder whether either side during a nuclear war would be able to distinguish a limited counterforce attack from one aimed at the destruction of all its forces or its population—a distinction critical to the doctrine of flexible response. Thus, the question is how many more options and new forces will enhance deterrence without increasing the chances of nuclear war. A few more, stable balancers believe, but not many.

Rather than resorting to new weapons systems in the event that deterrence fails in Europe, stable balancers argue that the United States should initially rely on conventional defense. Nuclear weapons should be introduced only as a last resort—some say only in response to first use by the other side—and even then their use should be confined to the battlefield. regional limit.

Additional tactical nuclear weapons in Europe increase the risk of escalation instead of assuring deterrence or defense. Alain Enthoven, who headed the Office of Systems Analysis under McNamara, explained this argument before Congress in 1974:

Tactical nuclear weapons cannot serve to redress a numerical inferiority in military manpower. . . . [They] cannot defend Europe; they can only destroy it. . . . Beyond the limited demonstrative use of a few weapons, there is no such thing as tactical nuclear war in the sense of sustained purposive military operations. . . . Tactical nuclear weapons cannot lead to a predictable military outcome. Nobody knows how to fight a tactical nuclear war.

Stable balancers see little political utility to be derived from a marginal numerical advantage in nuclear capabilities. "What in the name of God is strategic superiority?" former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger mused aloud at a Moscow press conference in July 1974. "What do you do with it?" It is difficult to demonstrate how numerical advantages influence the behavior of allies, enemies, or officials in the American government. In Warnke's words:

The Soviet Union has more missile launchers than we have. Now that is a kind of "superiority" which is clearly without any kind of significance, unless by our own rhetoric we give it political significance that it does not deserve. In the most meaningful measure, which is individually deliverable nuclear warheads, we still have something close to a three-to-one lead. And even that doesn't give us any meaningful superiority. . . .³

War fighters, however, consider nuclear weapons an integral part of U.S. military options. Hence, they minimize the significance of the nuclear threshold. In his book, *On Escalation*, Kahn argues that "the line between the external world and the nation may even be stronger as a firebreak than the threshold between conventional and nuclear war, since it is an older distinction, invested with far more emotion and prestige." Some war fighters advocate the deployment of mininukes and counterforce capabilities as a means of further eroding the firebreak.

Regardless of how nuclear war breaks out, war fighters maintain that deterrence would not cease to function as a restraint to further escalation. In their scenarios, restoration of deterrence requires a one-shot escalation to convince the enemy that the United States is prepared to retaliate further unless the aggression is brought to an end. Like the stable balancers' expectation of an escalatory spiral, the war fighters' faith in resurrecting deterrence is premised on the belief that the USSR will respond to U.S. first use with restraint.

³ "The Real Paul Warnke," interview by Walter Miale, *The New Republic*, March 26, 1977, p. 23.

* CPD could reply: ²⁾ If you had it, you'd know;

(b) If we lost it, you'll know.

(HAK didn't understand this in 1957, either!)
(HAK did)

Should the one-shot escalation fail to deter the enemy, some war fighters are prepared to fight to prevail, if not to win. Two former Defense Department officials, T. K. Jones and W. Scott Thompson, question the relevance of deterrence based on mutual assured destruction (MAD) and suggest that it be replaced by a "survival-oriented doctrine," emphasizing civil defense, air defense, and antiballistic missiles (ABMs). This, they claim, would enable the United States to come out ahead of the Soviet Union in a nuclear exchange.⁴

They assume that relative deprivation, rather than unacceptable damage, is what counts in nuclear war. For any level of devastation, however catastrophic, may prove acceptable to the Russians and hence fail to deter them from striking first. Thus, they maintain that the Soviet objective is not to prevent destruction but to recover following an exchange. They conclude that the only alternative is for the United States to adopt recovery as its objective, too. *or "detering" SU meaning"*

War fighters also assert that a limited nuclear exchange would not subject command, control, and communications to unprecedented strain. Such problems, says Kahn in *On Escalation*, "which are very great in sustained high-intensity nuclear wars, are much reduced in slow-motion exchanges that are limited and deliberate." Envisioning first use of nuclear weapons for "redress, warning, bargaining, punitive, fining, or deterrence purposes," Kahn cites the possibility that "[one] side is losing conventionally and decides to use nuclear weapons. It doesn't use them to damage the other side in a way that really hurts, because that could easily cause escalation to get out of control. But it might drop a bomb or two on some logistical target, such as a . . . railroad yard."

A Soviet attack in Europe is deterred only by the certainty of appropriate U.S. retaliation. NATO's strategy of flexible response envisages controlled escalation in Europe.

⁴ T. K. Jones and W. Scott Thompson, "Central War and Civil Defense," *Orbis*, Fall 1978.

moving from conventional defense to tactical nuclear weapons, to forward-based strategic weapons, and ultimately to U.S. strategic forces. To war fighters, however, this strategy has two significant problems.

The first is the decoupling of U.S. strategic forces from NATO. MAD makes American willingness to use those forces in defense of its allies seem less than credible. The capacity for limited strikes on Soviet forces or economic targets, war fighters say, would reassure ally and enemy alike of American intentions, but it would do so only if the United States is willing to initiate nuclear war. Deterrence would be reinforced by dispersing nuclear weapons on the battlefield and authorizing theater commanders to use them under certain circumstances. Such first use would not be confined to the battlefield.

Secondly, NATO strategy calls for tactical nuclear weapons to deter Soviet first use in Europe, to retaliate if deterrence fails, and to plug holes in the allied conventional defense line. Yet it is difficult to design weapons, targeting programs, and battlefield tactics compatible with all three objectives. War fighters resolve this problem by seeking to shift emphasis away from deterrence.

War fighters claim that even marginal strategic superiority has political significance. In the words of Colin S. Gray:

Americans' perceptions of their country's relative standing, [and] perceptions by others, . . . rest, in part, . . . upon assessments of the state of the strategic nuclear balance. Nobody knows, with any confidence, how a World War III would terminate. . . . But everybody knows which way the balance is tending, and this . . . contributes to a constricting of American freedom of foreign policy action.⁵

Choosing between Irreconcilables

Faced with such fundamentally irreconcilable differences between war fighters and

⁵ Colin S. Gray, "The Strategic Forces Triad: End of the Road?" *Foreign Affairs*, July 1978, pp. 774-775.

44. i.e. as support for US FS

* This is less crazy for extraneous deterrence!

i.e. if US has struck first!

"Sovs will reply if they can hope to recover" (?)

whereas they wait if...

45.

stable balancers, it is difficult to make a choice between the two. Both doctrines are largely deductive, almost axiomatic. Historical evidence does not facilitate the choice—indeed, what is at issue is precisely whether the lessons of past wars apply to nuclear conflict.

There is no opportunity for experimentation when dealing with nuclear war. Nowhere is this more transparent than in the liturgy on the Triad. "In the early 1960's," writes Gray, "the American defense community understood, almost as an axiom, that strategic stability flowed from the existence of large and diverse forces." What evidence would validate or invalidate such an axiom?

Logic is of little help in making the choice. The stable balancers' belief rests on a central paradox: How can an enemy be deterred by retaliatory threats that the United States would manifestly prefer not to carry out? Thomas Schelling has sidestepped the paradox by citing the risk that nuclear war, once it erupts, may get out of hand—"the threat that leaves something to chance."* But that leaves too much to chance for war fighters, who want to fill every lacuna in the stable balancers' logic with options for limited nuclear retaliation.

Yet war fighters create paradoxes of their own. In attempting to deter a first strike against the United States, they promote weapons systems that make retaliation more likely but reduce damage to the enemy, thereby weakening deterrence. In seeking to prevent war in Europe, they must reconcile the U.S. intent to threaten tactical nuclear war with the risk of escalation. Likewise, in deterring nuclear blackmail, they must explain how to threaten U.S. first use without encouraging Soviet pre-emption.

Rational choice between the stable balancers' and the war fighters' doctrines is so difficult that a president may be tempted to hedge, waver, or obfuscate. The difficulty of choosing between the two logics is only compounded by the political stature of their pro-

* Thomas Schelling, *Strategy of Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963).

ponents. This may help account for the inconsistency of the Carter administration's posture. Discussing nuclear war fighting at his confirmation hearings, for instance, Defense Secretary Harold Brown equivocated: "I will not say it is impossible, but I do not think it at all likely that a limited strategic nuclear exchange will remain limited." Symptomatic of the administration's ambivalence was the internal division over development and deployment of the neutron bomb—an issue that is still unresolved.

Although a choice between the two schools of thought is difficult, a closer examination of each clearly reveals the limitations of the war fighters' logic. Their doctrine is based on the contention that leaders will retain control of nuclear forces, that flexibility in both deployment and targeting will provide opportunities to de-escalate, and that leaders can use cease-fires for bargaining with the opponent and with the domestic opposition. The difficulties involved in processing information and options under conditions of extreme uncertainty and tension and the constraints imposed by bureaucratic, domestic, and alliance politics under such circumstances cast doubt on war fighters' contentions.

Organizational routines may greatly constrict flexibility in a crisis. War plans may be so recondite and political leaders so absorbed in other matters that military organizations may determine which plans are put into effect without the civilian leaders' full awareness of the alternatives. The only wartime use of atomic weapons to date, the American bombings of Japan, is a case in point. President Harry S Truman was never exposed to the full array of options at his disposal. He may not have even understood precisely what he had authorized the Army Air Force and the Manhattan Project to do.

Even when civilians devise their own options, organizations are notoriously resistant to modifying their routines to accommodate them. This was clearly illustrated by McNamara's difficulties in getting the Navy to draw in its blockade of Cuba in 1962. Com-

municating orders may also prove difficult. Several hours before the six-day Middle East war of 1967, the Joint Chiefs of Staff transmitted four messages to move the U.S.S. *Liberty* into safer waters. None arrived in time. Under less ideal conditions than those of 1967, command and control procedures would be under much greater stress and might collapse completely.

Limited targeting against an enemy's military forces and industry also imposes unusual demands on the armed services. It requires an organization prepared for large-scale retaliation to conduct discreet, carefully limited attacks under crisis conditions. The airmen who struck Nagasaki, for instance, were under orders to conduct visual bombing only so as to ensure accuracy. Instead, they made a radar approach through the cloud cover and missed their target by a considerable distance.

Cognitive barriers to crisis performance may also produce rigidity or, even worse, paralysis. Trained for retaliation against nuclear attack, enemy commanders must be able to recognize a limited U.S. counterforce strike large enough to be taken seriously but small enough not to trigger a full-scale attack. Yet this assumes that the enemy's perceptions during a crisis are accurate, that the threshold beyond which it responds is well defined, and that the United States gauges that threshold correctly in its attack. The American experience with the bombing of North Vietnam indicates otherwise.

Under the strain of uncertainty, presidents would also be subject to considerable stress in making decisions. In Kissinger's words, "It is not easy to see how a president could ever gain sufficient confidence to stake everything on weapons for which there is no operational experience in wartime, on the basis of tenuous intelligence and with the certainty of tens of millions of casualties."⁷

Unconcerned about rigidity under such

⁷ Henry A. Kissinger, "American Strategic Doctrine and Diplomacy," in Michael Howard (ed.), *The Theory and Practice of War* (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1967), pp. 282-283.

circumstances, James Schlesinger argued before Congress in 1974 that "doctrines control the minds of men only in periods of nonemergency. They do not necessarily control the minds of men during periods of emergency." Yet paralysis, not creativity, would be the likely result of improvisation in crisis.

Political pressures, far from diminishing, may be especially intense in a nuclear crisis. Theater commanders may be anxious to use every weapon at their disposal rather than see their forces suffer even a temporary defeat. Chiefs of staff may be unwilling to see only one service gain authority to use nuclear weapons. The greater the variety of nuclear forces, the more intense the political pressure. Leaders may feel they must respond to any nuclear attack, however limited. They might likewise be reluctant to accept a settlement without something to show for the destruction that resulted from a nuclear exchange. The extent to which the Kennedy administration sought to camouflage any concessions it made to the USSR during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis suggests that leaders feel compelled to protect their political flanks at home, even when faced with nuclear confrontation. If political concessions seem riskier than escalation, terminating nuclear war might be treacherous.

Alliance politics will also play a part. In Washington tactical nuclear weapons may appear to be a more plausible defense for Europe than strategic nuclear weapons, which invite a Soviet counterattack against the United States. Yet what looks tactical an ocean away may well seem strategic to those living where the warheads will explode. Allies may have overwhelming incentives during a crisis to use theater nuclear weapons against the Soviet heartland in the hope of insuring that any nuclear exchange will take place over their heads. In a nuclear confrontation in Europe, political differences may not be confined to mere words: The French *force de frappe* may stiffen the back of an overly flexible American response.

* i.e., that US ⁴⁹ will "float up" SO ~~other~~ + warheads?

Seductive Options

The new generation of nuclear weapons on the drawing board and the increased acceptance of nuclear war fighting among defense planners have stimulated a doctrinal challenge to stable balancers. Yet three current conditions weigh in their favor.

First, the conventional balance in Europe does not appear to be conspicuously unfavorable to NATO by the standards of the past two decades. This assessment has lent new realism to NATO's effort to modernize and upgrade its conventional forces.

Another is the improved accuracy of weapons systems, such as precision-guided munitions. These make possible the substitution of conventional for nuclear warheads for some missions.

A third is the absence of any real threat to the mutuality of assured destruction. The alleged vulnerability of American land-based Minuteman missiles and Soviet civil defense are often cited as assuring Soviet strategic advantage, yet they pose no such threat. A first strike against all U.S. land-based missiles, a theoretical possibility by the mid-1980's, would be inordinately complex and risky for the USSR. Moreover, it would leave the United States with thousands of nuclear weapons on submarines and bombers with which to retaliate. Soviet civil defense preparations would not prevent an American second strike from imposing unacceptable damage. Still, war fighters regard Minuteman vulnerability and Soviet civil defense as major problems, since both affect the relative numbers of survivors after a nuclear exchange.

Purported Minuteman vulnerability has prompted the war fighters' enthusiasm for the MX missile, with its hard-target kill capacity, although increased mobility alone would be an adequate response. Likewise, the prospect that the Soviets could survive a nuclear exchange better than the Americans has generated support for a U.S. civil defense program, which would actually promote an American first, not second, strike.

The war fighters' strategy represents a revival of the traditional military belief that weapons exist to fight wars, not to deter them, and that a nuclear weapon is like any other in this respect. As with many a military strategy, the new pressure for nuclear war fighting may represent the arrival of an idea whose time is past.

Yet the Carter administration, while perhaps slowing the pace somewhat, continues to seek options for nuclear war fighting. However seductive the appeal of those options to military traditionalists, the administration should now reconsider the trend toward a nuclear war-fighting doctrine before it is too late.

A number of decisions are pending that could implicitly resolve the debate over strategy. The war fighters' wish list includes silo-busting ballistic missiles, theater nuclear forces capable of striking the USSR from Western Europe, modernization of battlefield nuclear weapons, and civil defense. These programs would make the U.S. force posture consonant with nuclear war fighting. Their approval would constitute a fundamental shift in American strategy.

War-fighting doctrines, despite their abstractness, can take on a reality all their own. Built into force structures and targeting programs, they can accelerate the pace of the arms race and increase the chances of nuclear war. Until now, war fighters have been more concerned with the process of escalation than with the control of that process. They have offered only the vaguest notion of how a nuclear war, once under way, might end. They have paid scant attention to organizational, cognitive, and political impediments to war termination. Those who contemplate nuclear war fighting should demonstrate how they would provide for a pause in the escalation of the conflict and how leaders on both sides could take advantage of that pause to achieve a settlement. Twenty years after Wohlstetter and Kahn proposed strategy for waging nuclear war, it is time to make war fighters think about terminating one.

* in era of high US superiority,
strategy (and full support of war-fighters)
was less critical.

But now is really: "a not-usable
war-fighting cap."

NITZE'S WORLD

by Alan Tonelson

Of the many obstacles facing Senate ratification and public approval of the Strategic Arms Limitation agreement (SALT II), few loom larger than the opposition of Paul H. Nitze. Following a long and distinguished career in public service, Nitze has turned his energies in recent years to heading off a SALT accord he believes will consign the United States to a position of military inferiority vis-à-vis the Soviet Union by the early 1980s.

He has played a critical role in the public debate over SALT since resigning from the U.S. strategic arms negotiating team in June 1974. As a co-founder and currently policy studies chairman of the influential Committee on the Present Danger, he has vigorously stumped against the treaty before congressional committees, on the lecture circuit, in numerous technical studies of the strategic balance, and in the pages of FOREIGN POLICY and Foreign Affairs. His charge that the Soviet Union has rejected the Western theory of mutual deterrence in favor of a nuclear war-winning strategy, and his specific warning that the U.S. land-based missile force will soon become vulnerable to a Soviet counterforce strike, have largely set the context of the present confrontation over SALT. If the treaty is killed in the Senate, Nitze will be entitled to much of the blame and the credit sure to be passed around.

Paul Nitze is a member in good standing of the remarkable group of lawyers and bankers—what Zbigniew Brzezinski has called the “WASP-eastern seaboard-Ivy League-Wall Street foreign affairs elite”—that has charted America's course in world

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... i.e. initiating ...

... in ...
- large MT - ...
... (But - ASW?)

affairs for much of this century. Born in Amherst, Massachusetts, in 1907, Nitze graduated from Harvard in 1928 and joined the prestigious New York investment banking firm of Dillon, Read and Co. the following year. After amassing a considerable personal fortune, he entered government service at the outset of World War II and worked in the Roosevelt administration's economic mobilization agencies during the war's early years.

He joined the State Department in 1946 and specialized in international trade and finance. He was best known in this period for his role in setting up the Marshall Plan and the Mutual Defense Assistance Program for Western Europe. In mid-1949 then Secretary of State Dean Acheson named Nitze to the Policy Planning Staff—headed by George Kennan—and entrusted him with the task of improving policy coordination between the State and Defense departments. When Kennan's growing dissatisfaction with what he saw as the increasing militarization of American diplomacy caused him to resign at the end of the year, Nitze succeeded him.

Nitze is “the smartest, most knowledgeable hawk in town.”

A Republican before the war, Nitze expected to be named assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs in the Eisenhower administration. But the appointment was blocked by conservative Republican senators, who opposed handing a top Defense position to a prime architect of what they called the “Truman-Acheson policies of disaster.” In 1953 he became head of the Foreign Service Educational Foundation in Washington, writing on defense issues and advising Democratic politicians on national security policy.

A leading candidate for secretary of defense in the Kennedy cabinet, Nitze was given the international security affairs post under Robert McNamara instead. Two years later, in late 1963, he was appointed secretary of the

* see * WWA, William Bundy, Carl Meyer
effect *

Navy, and in 1967 he succeeded Cyrus Vance as deputy secretary of defense. From then until 1969, Nitze essentially ran the day-by-day operations of the Pentagon as first McNamara and then Clark Clifford grappled with the Vietnam war.

From 1969 to 1974, he served as chief Pentagon representative on the SALT delegation, resigning at the height of the Watergate scandal because he believed that President Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger were playing impeachment politics with the arms talks.

Former Chief of Naval Operations Elmo Zumwalt's characterization of Nitze as "the Winston Churchill of today" typifies the boundless admiration Nitze has generated in his supporters. But even his fiercest opponents effusively praise his dedication, ability, and intelligence; in Washington, one frequently hears that Nitze is "the smartest, most knowledgeable hawk in town."

Many of the sources of this respect are obvious. After over 25 years of policy making, Nitze has accumulated more experience in national security affairs than almost anyone else and has participated in many of the central decisions of U.S. foreign policy in the postwar era. His stints as a SALT negotiator and as deputy secretary of defense have given him an intimidating command of nuclear weapons technology. Moreover, the five years Nitze spent negotiating SALT I and much of SALT II with the Soviets bestow his pronouncements on Moscow's intentions with seemingly unassailable authority.

However, his influence is based on far more than his experience, his expertise, or even his widely admired character. It stems, too, from the generally held belief that throughout his career Nitze has been an unusually perceptive maker, observer, and critic of U.S. foreign policy. Nitze and his supporters claim that both as a public servant and as a private citizen, he has shown himself to be anything but a run-of-the-mill hard-liner. In their view, he has taken positions that events have consistently proven right.

Nitze's effectiveness can also be traced to his insistence on raising fundamental questions about the wisdom and feasibility of cooperating with the Soviet Union. The doubts he voices about the Kremlin's trustworthiness and peaceful intentions are shared by many Americans and may seal the fate not only of SALT but also of détente, if they are allowed to grow.

Yet is the image Nitze has cultivated—of a judicious policy analyst given to sound, prudent judgments about Soviet military strength and the nature of the Soviet threat—supported by an examination of his record and views over the past three-and-a-half decades? The worthy doubts he expresses about Soviet intentions are based on views so strident that they should trouble even those skeptical of the value of détente and arms control agreements. "You just have to be prudent in this business" of foreign and strategic policy, Nitze said in 1977. But one strains to imagine a prudent foreign policy flowing from the assumptions underlying Nitze's world.

Nuclear Saber Rattling

It is clear that the world Nitze perceives in 1979 is not different in its essentials from the one he saw in the late 1940s. Phrases, concepts, and arguments he used 30 years ago appear with uncanny regularity in his contemporary writings, as do a preoccupation with data and hard statistical evidence and a corresponding tendency to downplay less tangible political considerations. In the words of Eugene V. Rostow, one of Nitze's close collaborators, "I would say that he feels that the perspective that was put together under Acheson's guidance has remained valid, and it has indeed been confirmed."

Lying at the heart of Nitze's case against SALT II is the belief that one of the superpowers can gain a degree of superiority sufficient to cow the other in a crisis, despite the presence of thousands of nuclear weapons on both sides. The idea that nuclear strength can generate political dividends is not new. As

Nitze frequently points out, clear-cut U.S. superiority has checked Soviet adventurism in the past and has brought the United States success in previous Cold War confrontations.

Moreover, unlike many congressional hardliners who have demanded that the United States seek strict equality in arms control agreements with the Soviets, Nitze fully recognizes the difficulties of identifying common denominators for comparing American and Soviet missile forces and endorses the goal of essential equivalence. Far from urging that Washington match Moscow weapon for weapon, Nitze argues that the relative sizes of U.S. and Soviet strategic nuclear forces are unimportant as long as the United States can deny the Soviets a theoretical war-winning capability. In his view, however, much larger American forces are needed to satisfy this definition of essential equivalence than are needed to meet the administration's requirements.

Nitze maintains that the provisions of SALT II could spell the end of essential equivalence and result in an effective U.S. shift toward "a posture of minimum deterrence," especially if the United States does not significantly add to its nuclear forces in the next few years.¹

If current strategic trends continue, Nitze believes that by the early 1980s "the Soviet Union will be in a position to destroy 90 percent of our ICBMs [intercontinental ballistic missiles] with an expenditure of only a third of its MIRVed [equipped with multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles] ICBMs. Even if one assumes the survival of most of our bombers on alert and our submarines at sea, the residue at our command would be strategically outmatched by the Soviet Union's retained war-making capability."² As a result, he argues, "it is possible to think of highly plausible scenarios, assuming a position of Soviet strategic superiority, and a

¹ Paul H. Nitze, "Assuring Strategic Stability in an Era of Detente," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1976, p. 227.

² Paul H. Nitze, SALT II—The Objectives Vs. The Results (Washington: The Committee on the Present Danger, undated), p. 3.

deterioration of crisis stability, in which, should the balloon go up, the outcome would be highly one-sided."³

The scenario Nitze uses to illustrate the consequences of strategic inferiority—which he believes to be all but inevitable in a post-SALT II world—is one that would leave a U.S. president with the dilemma of dealing with a major Soviet challenge to Western interests by either backing down in order to avoid losing in an unequal nuclear exchange or playing his nuclear card against a Soviet leadership acutely aware of its strategic preponderance.

The first option is unacceptable in Nitze's view. He argues that it would represent the first step in a long-run policy of appeasing Soviet aggression. But he contends that choosing the second option would lead to nuclear disaster for the United States. Far from forcing the Soviet Union to back down in a crisis, nuclear saber rattling with an inadequate U.S. deterrent would probably prompt a pre-emptive Soviet counterforce strike against U.S. land-based ICBMs. American leaders would then be forced either to surrender, thus preserving a militarily second-rate but still functioning society, or to lash out with surviving American forces against Soviet population centers. Nitze argues that such an attack would doubtless provoke a reciprocal strike from far more powerful Soviet forces that his figures show would "result not only in military defeat for the United States but in wholly disproportionate and truly irremediable destruction to the American people."⁴

Nitze's scenario rests largely on a mathematical model of a Soviet first strike that seeks to quantify the results of a large-scale exchange of counterforce attacks. Many critics claim that the tremendous technical difficulties and uncertainties that would face Soviet

³ Paul H. Nitze, "Soviet's Negotiating Style Assayed," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, February 24, 1975, p. 66.

⁴ Paul H. Nitze, "Deterring Our Deterrent," *FOREIGN POLICY* 25 (Winter 1976-77), p. 206.

US relies less on force/CO, because it wishes
to stay quiet - already big haul of our combat,
not - hypothetically - quiet efforts will FO.

Tonelson

planners contemplating such an extraordinary and unprecedented operation are necessarily ignored in such a model. The scenario also depends on the existence of an extremely effective Soviet civil defense system to reduce the casualties that would result from U.S. retaliation, an assumption many strategic specialists consider wholly unjustified.

Moreover, it also reflects views Nitze has held since the early years of the nuclear era about the implications of strategic superiority, the military significance of nuclear weapons, and the need for and feasibility of using force in support of U.S. foreign policy. Throughout his public life, Nitze has maintained that military force is the prime level of influence in international affairs, and he has been a steadfast believer in the viability of limited war in the nuclear era.

Since his days on Acheson's Policy Planning Staff, he has insisted that in the absence of a nuclear monopoly or of a tremendous imbalance in the strategic power of the United States and the Soviet Union, the ability to fight conventional wars would be critical to preserving the security of the noncommunist world. This was precisely the theory he propounded as director of the comprehensive strategic assessment undertaken by the Truman administration in the winter of 1949-1950, when the Soviet Union's development of an atomic striking capability and its already recognized conventional superiority in Europe seemed in many American eyes to threaten to shift the world balance of power.

The joint State-Defense study group Nitze headed recommended several responses to this threat in the landmark Cold War document NSC-68. These included an acceleration of the hydrogen bomb program to insure continued U.S. strategic superiority and a massive build-up of conventional forces to counter "Soviet" nonnuclear military threats.

The Kremlin's Master Plan

Nitze's calls for increased limited war capabilities—including both conventional and theater nuclear forces—persisted through-

out the 1950s. His main target was the strategic doctrine of massive retaliation declared by John Foster Dulles in 1954, which he criticized as incapable of dealing with the local threats to the free world's security that communist forces had proven willing and able to mount.

Moreover, along with many defense intellectuals and Democratic party politicians, Nitze charged that the Eisenhower administration's failure to rush ahead with ICBM development raised the prospect of dangerous, destabilizing bomber and missile gaps between U.S. and Soviet capabilities opening up by the end of the decade. Nitze's current arguments against SALT II imply that although U.S. nuclear forces are much larger and less vulnerable today, the "balance of terror" remains nearly as delicate as when Albert Wohlstetter coined that phrase in 1959.

In Nitze's view, the Berlin crisis of 1961 and the Cuban missile crisis proved beyond any doubt that strategic nuclear superiority can determine the outcome of U.S.-Soviet showdowns. Drawing from his first-hand Pentagon experience, Nitze has written that in Berlin "our theater position was clearly unfavorable; we relied entirely on our position of strategic nuclear superiority to face down Chairman Khrushchev's ultimatum. In Cuba, the Soviet Union faced a position of both theater inferiority and strategic inferiority; they withdrew the missiles they were deploying."

But Nitze's analyses of both world wars and the lessons he draws from their origins have also profoundly affected his strategic thinking. A visitor to Europe in 1914 and during the 1930s, he twice witnessed the outbreak of global war. To this day, Nitze regards Europe in 1914 as "the clearest case of crisis instability" that world history provides. And his writings repeatedly describe the 1970s as a new decade of appeasement.

This perspective has led Nitze to remain confident that the nuclear superpowers can

⁵ Paul H. Nitze, *Consequences of an Agreement*, (unpublished position paper, November 1, 1977), p. 11.

still easily project their power and influence, particularly in the Third World. He seems reluctant to view the nations of Africa and Asia as capable of offering meaningful resistance to superpower pressures and seriously doubts that anything as intangible as nationalism can make much of a difference in countering Soviet military might.

His evident certainty that military power is the ultimate power seems to cause Nitze to overlook some very real frustrations encountered by Moscow and the transient nature of many Soviet successes. Thus, while Nitze writes a great deal about the Kremlin's master plan to dominate the world, he says virtually nothing about how the Soviet Union's strength could not prevent Soviet advisers from being kicked out of Egypt, Somalia, and the Sudan, and how its domineering influence cannot prevent Angola from letting Gulf run its oil fields and Vietnam from hankering after U.S. recognition and economic aid.

Moreover, his belief that the mere existence of nuclear weapons—as distinguished from a nuclear monopoly—has not fundamentally changed the nature of war leans heavily on the premise that nuclear war need not be catastrophic. At first glance, this seems a strange view for Nitze to hold. If anyone in the defense community is thoroughly familiar with the effects of a nuclear attack, it is Nitze, who helped supervise the U.S. government study of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings as a member of the Strategic Bombing Survey. And he has strongly supported the view that nuclear war would be so destructive that both superpowers should take extraordinary measures to prevent it.

At the same time, Nitze has never believed that the fearsome destructive power of nuclear weapons creates any intrinsic obstacles to their use, and he has little confidence that nuclear weapons will always be confined to a purely deterrent function. The decision to use nuclear weapons, Nitze argues, should not be based on the suicidal desperation envisioned in the final phase of a mutual deterrence scenario. He has suggested that such a

decision, by its very nature, could not be based on such irrational considerations, because the use of nuclear weapons necessarily presupposes hope of military victory. Thus, Nitze clearly regards nuclear weapons as similar to conventional weapons, in the sense that both are tools of foreign policy whose use can, must, and will be contemplated. *maybe?* *plus?*

Yet his oft-stated claims that nuclear war will not necessarily result in the destruction of civilization and that a conflict involving intercontinental nuclear strikes can be limited are not derived from case studies or from history. They are based on nothing more than calculations. They originate in the realm of theory and in the data banks of computers. They have no basis in experience.

Is the conduct of foreign policy possible in Nitze's world, or just the waging of crusades?

Admittedly, if Nitze's calculations cannot be proven right, they cannot be proven wrong either. Yet their limitations as bases of policy emerge clearly when his scenario for a nuclear exchange is examined. It begs stupendous questions. What further presidential options does Nitze believe could be provided? What mix of diplomatic and military alternatives would he like to leave at the president's command? What possibilities for diplomacy would remain after a Soviet strike on 1,000 U.S. missile silos in the American heartland? Would restraint be possible in the chaotic emotional and psychological aftermath of the outbreak of thermonuclear war?

Nitze provides no answers, for his exchange is astonishingly abstract in nature. It takes place in a political vacuum. There is no reference to the enormous increase in international tensions that would precede a Soviet counterforce attack, no hint of the wholesale transformation of the international political, psychological, and emotional climate it would produce, putting punishing strains on military and political command structures.

There is no recognition that the events leading up to a genuine crossroads in human history—the firing of thousands of strategic nuclear weapons—would be anything other than a neat, mechanical, step-by-step procession to confrontation, from which the two sides could easily disengage after the first round of missiles was launched. Nitze gives very little idea of what a post-first strike world would be like—only that there would be a president and that he would want a greater variety of “options” than the current strategic balance provides.

Unduly Alarmist Views

His current characterizations of the U.S.-Soviet military balance and his claims that the trends point to clear Soviet superiority by the mid-1980s are only the latest in a long line of warnings Nitze has issued over the years of dangerous new increases in Moscow's military might. A good idea of Nitze's record can be gleaned from examining two seminal strategic forecasts that he strongly influenced: NSC-68 and the Gaither report.

NSC-68 was commissioned by Truman on January 30, 1950, in the wake of the Soviet atomic bomb explosion, the fall of China, and other international disasters that befell the United States in 1948 and 1949. It constituted the U.S. government's first and most ambitious attempt to cope with the brand new problems posed to national security planners by the unique and unprecedented phenomenon known as Cold War. Directed by Nitze, NSC-68 claimed that by mid-1954, the Soviet Union would probably possess some 200 atomic bombs, a number judged by Nitze and his colleagues to be large enough to neutralize America's “marked atomic superiority over the Soviet Union, which, together with the potential capabilities of the United States in other forces and weapons, inhibits aggressive Soviet action.” NSC-68 described this threat as rising “steadily and rather rapidly.”

The report added that the United States also faced “the contingency that within the next four years, the Soviet Union will pos-

sess the military capability of delivering a surprise atomic attack of such weight” that in the absence of a major American strategic build-up, the United States could not guarantee that “it would survive the initial blow and go on to the eventual attainment of its objectives.” That the Soviets never achieved a nuclear war-winning capability in the time foreseen by NSC-68 is now clear. Asked in a recent interview if he thought his judgments were overly pessimistic in 1950, Nitze replied, “I don't think so. Ability and intention are two different things.”

In the late 1950s, Nitze was in the vanguard of those who detected another Soviet threat to U.S. nuclear superiority that never materialized—the possibility of a so-called missile gap foreseen in the Gaither report of 1957. Formally entitled “Deterrence and Survival in the Nuclear Age,” this report became one of the most influential strategic treatises of the postwar period. In particular, its claim that the Soviet Union could win the race to develop ICBMs and achieve a decisive strategic edge before the end of the decade sparked a bitter controversy and provided Kennedy with a major campaign issue in 1960. Nitze was made a special consultant to the project and had a major hand in drafting the study.

That this missile gap never emerged is now an accepted fact. The Kennedy administration admitted that the problem had not materialized. Nitze agrees that the Gaither report projection was wrong, but his principal defense—that contrary to the allegations of critics such as George Kistiakowsky, Eisenhower's special assistant for science and technology, the report never predicted a Soviet ICBM force of 150 missiles by late 1959—ignores the Gaither Committee's case.

While it never predicted the exact size or pace of future Soviet ICBM deployment and never used the expression “missile gap,” the report anticipated that danger, projecting an overwhelming Soviet ICBM threat to the U.S. deterrent in an alarmingly short time. “The USSR will probably achieve a significant ICBM

delivery capability with megaton warheads by 1959," the report concluded, and it argued that if U.S. military programs were not expanded and improved soon, the Soviet build-up could give Moscow the ability to wipe out America's strategic bombers.

Summing up the views of many Gaither report critics, the Joint Committee on Defense Production of the U.S. Congress issued a report in April 1976 asserting that "the nonexistent missile gap and the recommendations for expanded military and civil defense spending that issued from [the Gaither report] were based on unduly alarmist views of Soviet capabilities and on predictions of 'spectacular progress' in the future, in much the same way that today's recommendations are based on simplified linear projections of current Soviet programs."

Nitze's tendency to overestimate Soviet military strength may flow from a conscious wish to display the Soviet threat in the most menacing light possible. The most authoritative study of NSC-68, for example, claims that in the first draft of the study, Nitze sought to "exaggerate the [Soviet] threat" in order to insure that those who read the report became worried enough to support its recommendations for drastically increased military spending.⁶

However, this alarmist stance can also be seen as the natural by-product of what must be understood as gut feelings about the Soviet Union that Nitze has held for 30 years. He has strongly supported the view stressed in NSC-68 that in the brutal competition of international politics, an authoritarian regime like the Soviet Union enjoys many natural advantages over a democracy like the United States. "The Kremlin," NSC-68 argued, "is able to select whatever means are expedient in seeking to carry out its fundamental design. Thus, it can make the best of

several possible worlds, conducting the struggle on those levels where it considers it profitable, and enjoying the benefits of pseudopeace on those levels where it is not ready for a contest."

Creatures of Ideology

These views have survived into the late 1970s, and they are reflected in Nitze's analysis of Soviet security needs. He suggests that Moscow should and does realize that the European North Atlantic Treaty Organization countries mean it no harm, that China currently poses no major threat to Soviet national well-being, and that the Kremlin's arguments to the contrary demonstrate its lack of interest in the concept of truly equal security for both superpowers.⁷

Nitze himself writes frequently that cold war and détente are essentially two names for the same thing. His belief that détente has not made a fundamental difference in Soviet-American relations is reasonable enough and is accepted now—or at least voiced—by many proponents of SALT II. But the proof he cites—that Moscow has not jettisoned its avowed faith that scientific socialism will eventually triumph around the world—is more problematic. So is his implication that Moscow's professed determination to avoid a nuclear war is belied by their refusal to abandon their beliefs.

Today, as in 1950, Nitze considers the Soviet Union a nation "doctrinally dedicated to achieving world hegemony" and therefore incapable of sincerely believing in the possibility of permanently reducing tensions with the United States.⁸ When this notion first emerged explicitly in the deliberations that produced NSC-68, it was vigorously disputed by the government's two leading Sovietologists, George Kennan and Charles Bohlen. They regarded it as overly simplistic

⁶ Paul Y. Hammond, "NSC-68: Prologue to Rearmament," in Warner R. Schilling, Paul Y. Hammond and Glenn H. Snyder (eds.), *Strategy, Politics and Defense Budgets* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), p. 371.

⁷ Paul H. Nitze, "Nitze: 'Essential Equivalence' Should Be Arms Talk Goal," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, July 22, 1974, p. 42.

⁸ Paul H. Nitze, "A Plea for Action," *The New York Times Magazine*, May 7, 1978, p. 116.

and feared it would add to the Truman administration's growing interest in military rather than diplomatic solutions to Cold War problems. In addition, they doubted that viewing the Soviets solely as creatures of ideology and virtually ignoring the security, economic, and domestic political roots of Soviet behavior would lead to a complete and accurate assessment of Soviet world aims.

In the 1950s Nitze's view of the Soviet Union as a compulsively hostile power forced to seek world domination led him to urge the United States to take the offensive in the Cold War. As Acheson's policy planning director, he resisted the idea that the United States should confine its foreign policy objectives to checking Soviet expansion and repeatedly advocated more aggressive policies.

Nitze and his admirers, such as former Central Intelligence Agency Deputy Director Richard Bissell, claim that a long record of opposition to the Kennedy-Johnson policies in Vietnam demonstrates that he has not stuck blindly to the Cold War line and that he has recognized its limitations and shortcomings. Nitze himself continually claims to have been "right about Vietnam" to establish his credentials as a truly prescient foreign policy analyst: During the Warnke confirmation hearings in February 1977, for example, he pointedly contended, "I cautioned against our massive intervention in Vietnam long before I recollect Mr. Warnke doing so." Moreover, he claims that he played a key role in blocking a commitment of American troops contemplated by the Kennedy administration in 1962, although there is no documentary evidence to support this.

But Nitze's highly ambiguous record as a Vietnam policy maker justifies no such sweeping conclusions. For example, he has repeatedly attributed his growing opposition to the war to his concern that the huge American effort in Southeast Asia was jeopardizing the U.S. ability to meet its other worldwide commitments, particularly in Europe. However, Nitze made clear that as late as early 1968, he believed South Vietnam's fall would

be "unacceptable . . . because it would mean a change in the correlation of forces between the Communist world and the free world."⁹

Yet if South Vietnam's survival was so critical, why was an American commitment to its defense so wrong-headed? And if European defense was suffering, then why not press for higher military budgets to pay for additional troops and weapons? The available evidence indicates that Nitze's doubts about the U.S. commitment were very narrowly drawn, and that he did not deviate from the belief that with the proper application of power, the war could have been won.

In 1950 he adhered to the widely held view that a defeat of free institutions anywhere is a defeat everywhere. Nitze's insistence that the Soviets presently have reason to believe that even problems facing the Western world that Moscow did nothing to cause—such as the economic upheavals caused by inflation and the increase in oil, food, and raw materials prices—are shifting the correlation of forces in their favor, indicates that he continues to see international politics as a rigid zero-sum game.

In Nitze's world, every difficulty encountered by noncommunist countries results in a corresponding increase in Soviet strength, and every addition to Soviet power is a loss for the United States. As he wrote in *The New York Times Magazine* in May 1978, U.S. policy today can either "proceed from accommodation leading to appeasement, or from a rallying of our forces for prudent resistance to any Soviet purpose of world hegemony."

In the 1970s Nitze's views of the Soviets have hardened into a suspicion so pervasive as to be paralyzing for policy making. For he believes that the search for cooperation with the Soviet Union can only be justified by satisfying either of two preconditions: that the United States deal with the Soviets from a position of unquestioned strength; or that in the absence of clear-cut American

⁹ John B. Henry II, "February, 1968," FOREIGN POLICY 4 (Fall 1971), p. 27.

superiority, the Soviets acknowledge immediately the fairness of U.S. negotiating positions. Nowhere is this clearer than in Nitze's indictment of Soviet behavior during the SALT negotiations.

He told the House Armed Services Committee soon after resigning from the U.S. negotiating team that the position taken by the American delegation to SALT II "was based on the concept of equality, or essential equivalence between the United States and the Soviet Union," but that "the position taken by the Soviet side was heavily one-sided in the Soviet favor." Thus, Nitze has concluded that the Soviet position amounted to a rejection of the concept of negotiating parity and indicated instead that Moscow sought through the talks to maximize its gains in the strategic competition.

The implications of Nitze's charges are starkly clear. First, the Soviets should have known that the U.S. proposals were scrupulously evenhanded and were not drawn up to give the United States an advantage in any way but with the interests of both sides in mind. Second, their rejection of these initial negotiating positions proved their lack of interest in mutually beneficial arms agreements.

Indeed, clarity is the dominant characteristic of Nitze's world. His world is a passion play, whose script is composed of print-outs of computer data. Its villains are clear to see and beyond redemption. Its heroes are morally pure but easily deceived by the wicked. Nitze's faith is based on eternal truths, to which all events must be made to conform. It traces its origins to the epic saga of U.S. foreign policy in a century of world war and cold war. It draws inspiration from the heroic strivings and wisdom of figures such as Acheson and James Forrestal. It is absolute, it is intolerant of rival faiths, and it disdains the idea of compromise upon which the world of politics is based. Is the conduct of foreign policy possible in Nitze's world, or just the waging of crusades? This question should be kept in mind in the upcoming debate on SALT.

BRINGING IN THE ALLIES

by Christopher J. Makins

Problems of West European security are increasingly coming within the scope of the bilateral U.S.-Soviet Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT). European governments must therefore be closely associated with, and probably directly involved in, future East-West negotiations on these problems.

Strategic arms limitations is no exception to the general rule that West Europeans rarely have a common view about anything. Yet there are distinctive ways in which Europeans think about SALT and distinctive interests they seek to protect, even though their policies may differ from time to time and from country to country. American advocates and critics of SALT alike have repeatedly shown frustration at West European attitudes and policies in this area, which suggests that Americans often fail to understand fully these distinctive European perceptions and interests. Improved understanding is essential to protect the fabric of the Atlantic Alliance from corrosion by SALT and to permit sound decisions on the role of Europeans in ongoing negotiations and on theater nuclear forces in Europe.

West European attitudes toward SALT have tended to be at once shallower and deeper, broader and narrower, than those of Americans. They have been shallower than American attitudes because European governments have not needed to develop the intellectual and bureaucratic infrastructure to make independent, informed judgments about many SALT issues. The mismatch between the highly specialized U.S. SALT bureaucracy, with its vested interest in pursuing SALT, and

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